

FWP R2 CAC Meeting

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2016
LOCATION: FWP Region 2 office (3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula)
TIME: 6-9:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Members: Tim Aldrich, Louie Bouma, Steve Clevidence, Dan Conn, Marc Cooke, Todd Frank, Charlie Johnson, Ross Keogh, Denley Loge, Bill Mitchell, Theresa Mondale, Jim Olson, Kylie Paul, Greg Price, Tom Puchlerz, Carey Schmidt, Joanne Weimer

Staff: Randy Arnold, Chet Crowser, Vivaca Crowser, Deb Espinoza, Pat Saffel, Dori Schiele & Mike Thompson

Guests: Bruce Auchly (FWP R4) and two R4 CAC members

Welcome & introductions

Because a few guests from R4 were in attendance to see how the R2 CAC operates, the CAC spent some time with a short round-robin introduction.

Fisheries news

Pat Saffel gave a fisheries update on current regional research projects. He reported that there is research being done on the Clark Fork River from Drummond to Rock Creek to answer the question of why there is less fish in this stretch compared to other reaches. Some of the initial findings show that the organic matter levels are higher, especially mid July-Aug, and that oxygen levels are depressed. There will be more research done to explore what may be causing this.

Pat also presented a report on river recreation data on the West Fork of the Bitterroot and Blackfoot Rivers. The finding shows an increase in river recreation use. They are assessing the number of commercial outfitters/guides compared to private use on river stretches and whether that use is increasing or decreasing; crowding at access points; and angling use versus other types of recreation. FWP is continuing to monitor use, define the issues and concerns, and identify thresholds of use and impacts. CAC members that are interested in this topic, are encouraged to stay in touch with Pat over the upcoming months.

Wildlife update/shoulder seasons

Mike Thompson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the elk shoulder season proposals and variations that attracted discussion and controversy in Region 2 during the public meetings in January. He explained that Region 2 proposed shoulder seasons in varying forms in 11 of 30 hunting districts. Seven of the 11 included overlap between the proposed rifle seasons and the archery-only season, so in response to public comment, FWP proposed that those early shoulder seasons take place only on private land to minimize any conflict with the archery overlap. A good discussion with the CAC ensued.

15+Forward

Vivaca Crowser gave an update FWP's 15+Forward vision initiative to help set department direction for the next 10 years. The Planning Team concluded its work in December, and the draft vision and guide document is now with the FWP Management Team for review and input. The branding and strategic communications planning piece of the initiative is continuing into the spring.

State Parks projects & updates

Chet Crowser gave an update on State Parks statewide priorities and regional projects and planning. Milltown State Park will likely move into its development phase this year but some access agreements are still in process and must be in place first. He presented a handout showing state park visitation and funding in comparison with neighboring states and discussed some of Montana's associated challenges. He also reported on the statewide parks classification project and how this may affect parks operations and prompt some unique management solutions and partnerships.

CAC Subcommittee Updates:

- **Trapping:** The trapping subcommittee did not have much to report but expressed an interest in further meetings.
- **Access:** The access subcommittee also expressed a need for getting together and set a meeting date for Thursday, March 10 at 6pm at the FWP office.

The subcommittees/discussion groups then broke into small groups to discuss their topics and meeting plans.

Round-robin:

The group spent 45 minutes on open discussion, led by CAC members. Topics included:

- **Wolf monitoring:** In response to CAC questions, Mike Thompson shared that wolf collaring efforts continue and that hunter harvest telephone surveys include a question about wolf sightings during hunting season.
- **New Smith River food storage requirements:** Todd Frank expressed concern that people will not be aware of the new requirements and what they need to do to comply. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter. There may be opportunity for Todd and others to work with FWP on outreach to floaters.
- **It was asked that in those HDs that cross regions if FWP staff from both regions could attend the season setting meetings.** There may be some possibility for this in future years.
- **Illegal fish introductions:** Discussion about what could be done to minimize these introductions and the impact of them. Pat Saffel shared that this issue ranks within the top three concerns for fisheries and enforcement.